the claw

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VOL. 3

Helping Hands

District 7 Achieves High State Rankings Across Schools

First Date Tips from Your Favorite J2 Bros

EHS Basketball Preview and Why STL Needs an NBA Team

Jayke and Jill Make a Christmas Show

the claw

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The ultimate goal of The Claw is reporting Sports, Culture, Life and Views stories to the students and faculty of Edwardsville High School. Journalism and Yearbook students collaborate to produce the stories and pictures; however, stories by students outside of these groups may submit work and be published, if the work is exceptional. The Claw is a student-run publication, and the opinions/views featured in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the views of District 7 or any of the staff it employs.

We appreciate letters to the editor, so long as the topics discussed remain school appropriate. These letters may not be any longer than 200 words, and can be sent to ehsclaweditor@gmail.com, or brought to room A113 before or after school.

We reserve the right to reject any letters for any reason, including inappropriateness, lack of space, etc.

We are not required to give an explanation for rejected letters.

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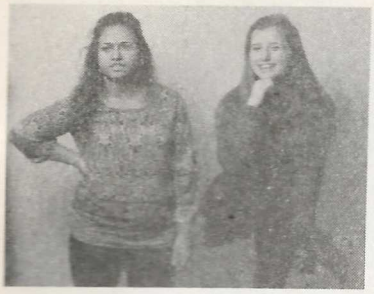
Letter From the Editor



THE WINTER QUARTER slump has hit us: the steering wheel is too cold to touch in the morning, science classrooms are so chilly they need to be heated with bunson burners and your homework has never looked less appealing than it does when it's pitch black at 5 p.m. Whether you're powering through college applications or just trying to survive your first semester finals, everyone could use a helping hand during this time of year.

EHS is a school of high achievers – our powerful athletic squads make no secret of this. It is less frequent that EHS students are lauded for their academic achievements, but District 7's recent high academic rankings are cause for celebration. Editor-in-Chief Cristina Rivera-Bosques breaks down the academic profiles of EHS students (pg. 4).

From adjusting to the American format of soccer to forming bonds with a varsity team that has been playing together for years, foreign exchange student Lucas Jonk has made a splash at EHS on and off the soccer field since arriving from the Netherlands in the fall. In his profile (pg. 6), Sports Editor Zain Pyarali takes a closer look at the finer eccentricities of the man, the myth, the legend: Lucas Jonk.

The St. Louis Cardinals have one of the largest fan bases in the country, so there is no questioning the devotion of St. Louisians to their beloved sports teams. Why, then, does St. Louis house teams for only three of the four major American spectator sports? Staff writer Drew Bradley assesses the pros and cons of bringing an NBA team to the Lou (pg. 10). Bradley suggests that the addition of an NBA team could help the St. Louis community by attracting fans and revenue and developing a more tight-knit sports fan culture.

The dream of continuing a high school sport at a collegiate level remains just that – a dream – for most. Staff writer Peter Byers explores the path to achieving what only an elite few are able to: being recruited to play college sports. Proactivity is the best tool for making yourself attractive to recruiters, so help yourself to Byers's tips (pg. 20).

The Journalism 2 Bros (Shawn Semmler, Zain Pyarali, Bailey Zimmer, Drew Bradley, Peter Byers and Ryan Rhong) have struck again, and this time they want to help you with your first date woes. Their inventive dating strategies will keep you from ever again uttering the words "I don't know, what do you want to do?"

Helping hands are everywhere at EHS – you just have to know where to find them. Whether you need help making those last few word-choice adjustments in your research paper or want to take your athletic performance to the next level this season, reach out for help – someone will be there to catch you.

Emily Ash
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Rankings Reflect on Town, Schools' Success

District 7 achieves consistency throughout schools

Photo courtesy of Maggie Perki

Story by: Cristina Rivera-Bosques, Co Editor-in-Chief

THERE'S NO DOUBT that Edwardsville athletes compete at high levels. Even among our top competitors (those top-notch Chicago schools), we've had the talent to bring the win back home to Southern Illinois many times.

But what is the good in a school that can win a couple of state titles but not perform in the classrooms as well? Fortunately, Edwardsville has achieved a perfect balance of both successes. And the nation has noticed.

Ranked no. 13 in Business Insider's "25 American Suburbs with the Best Value," Edwardsville's mixture of good standing athletics and education outshines other communities.

Nerdwallet also ranked Edwardsville no. 1 in "Best Cities in Illinois for Young Families" in 2013.

"The town's public schools at every level, from elementary school to high school, have a near-perfect rating...," Nerdwallet said. Great Schools rated District 7 a 10 out of 10. District 7 was also ranked no. 12 out of 26 on a list of "Best School Districts in the St. Louis Metropolitan Area" from 2015 Niche Rankings. According to Niche Rankings, a high ranking demonstrates good use of teachers and resources.

Student athletes, scholars and teachers helped District 7 reach higher academic standards than ever before, scoring the highest on the Illinois State Achievement Test and Prairie State Exam in Madison, Monroe and St. Clair County.

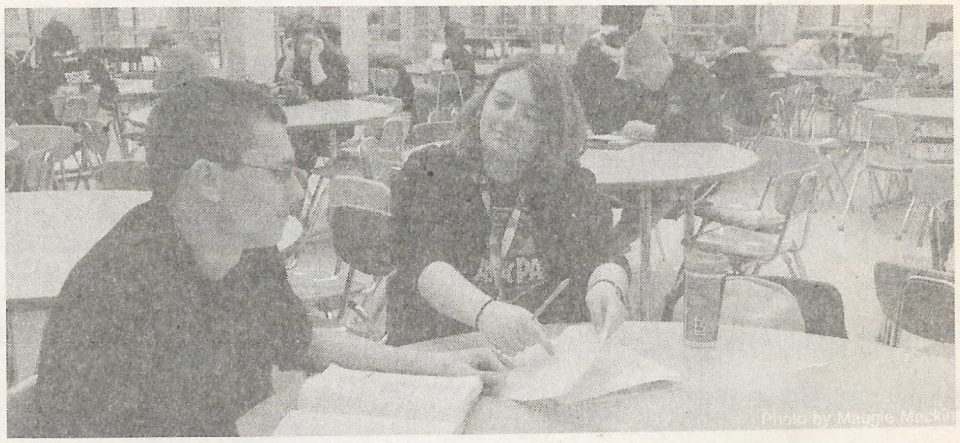

Photo by Maggie Mackie

Far above: Students last year test in the gym. Above: Seniors Brianna Roseman and Brandon Edwards help each other prepare for their upcoming finals in study hall.

Consistency is the key. District 7 schools provide congruity in the classes, allowing students to score similar test scores no matter what school they attend. "Students can go to Woodland or Columbus and average about the same test score," Assistant Principal Mr. Alex Fox said.

Families value this consistency. "You can live anywhere in the district and still get a quality education," Mr. Alex Fox said.

Teachers stimulate this process. As they are hired, teachers are trained through the same district-provided curriculum and technology workshop From there, they are encouraged to continue training through their own workshops and continu their higher education."This is something that we expect," Mr. Fox said. "We want them to learn and train as much as they can."

Spanish teacher Ms. Jennifer Morgan is currently working on earning her Master's degree in Administration from SIUE.

"Going back to school has strengthened my relatio with the administration," Ms. Morgan said. "It also helps me understand how big decisions are made a how answers come about."

To prepare students, teachers teach the curriculum, but they also teach strategies for standardized test taking. Principal Dr. Dennis Cramsey explained that teachers use resources and have a good handle on parents and students.

"Teachers recognize that all students can learn at every level," Dr. Cramsey said. "They also challenge our top students."

Hardworking students also play a big role. Senior Taylor Robinson devotes hours of his nights toward studying to earn good grades. Robinson, who has taken multiple AP courses, applied to Vanderbilt and Harvard University.

Committed student athletes also contribute to the success in Edwardsville. Senior softball player Kallen Loveless is a committed D1 softball player to St. Louis University and also one of the highest in her class rank.

It gets difficult for the pitcher to maintain every skill. From keeping up with school work, to maintaining her physical strength for collegiate softball, things get difficult to manage. But Loveless, among with many other student athletes at EHS, has proven to be successful in controlling her crazy schedule. This emphasizes the school's brightest students.

Senior Katie Zelechowski has also developed into the great student she is. Zelechowski believes that academics play a big part in student life and a teenager's future.

District 7 provides a system where students can succeed. The rankings Edwardsville has received lately are rankings that highlight our potential, both scholastic and athletic.

"The district believes that everyone can learn new things every day and become better," Ms. Morgan said.

EHS Students Strive to Study

Taylor Robinson, senior

Hours a night studying: 9
Number of weighted courses: 5
Dream school: Stanford

Katie Zelechowski, senior

Hours a night studying: 4
Number of weighted courses: 3
Dream school: Washington University

Kyle Krumm, senior

Hours a night studying: 3
Number of weighted courses: 6
Dream school: U of I Champaign

Out with the Fall, in with a Food Haul

The holidays bring forth a new variety of food

Story by: Erin Linden-Swafford, Staff Writer

Photos courtesy of AP

THE HOLIDAY SEASON is the single greatest opportunity to vacuum through nine serving sizes of mashed potatoes and wash it all down with your seasonal eggnog. Another bonus? If you gain an extra 10 pounds over break and come back to school, spilling out of your leggings won't be easily passed.

It's that time of year where your taste buds are craving a creamy, sweet dish to bring forth the holidays, and beginning with the new seasonal beverages at Starbucks, get ready to step it into gear.

Starbucks features five new beverages for the freezing season. "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" runs through your mind then settles on your taste buds as you down their new Chestnut Praline Latte. Topped with whipped cream, caramel and perfectly portioned pieces of praline, this espresso will have you circling back through the drive-thru for round two.

If you're craving a minty twist to your average coffee, go for the Peppermint Mocha at Starbucks. Sweetened whipped cream and the dark chocolate swirls make this drink a must-have for the holidays, not to mention the peppermint flavored syrup (although I became slightly disappointed to find no peppermint pieces on top of my mountainous whip).

Starbucks offers three other specialties for this winter season, such as a Caramel Brulee Latte, an Eggnog Latte and a Gingerbread Latte.

Or possibly, you desire something to match the way your skin feels against the bitter-cold wind: ice cream. Fortunately, Dairy Queen has you covered. Stop in for their famous Pumpkin Pie Blizzard. Made with real pumpkin pie, you'll be completely satisfied.

If you're much more of a cook than a consumer, you're in luck.

I usually find myself craving the overall "job well done" of stirring up and baking a delicious treat myself, and of course, reluctantly sharing.

Every Thanksgiving and Christmas, I cook up a perfectly executed chocolate pie, and I've never received a single complaint, including from others' stomachs for once.

It's quite the double threat. Not only are you devouring a pudding-like, creamy soft center of chocolate, but you're breaking into a crisp graham cracker crust.

If you put in the effort, you can bake up your own masterpiece. The recipe for this decadent dessert is below.

Whether you're going out or staying in this holiday season, be sure you're always treating your taste buds and leaving your stomach full.

Chocolate Pie – 9 inch

Ingredients

2 c. whole milk, divided
6 squares (6 oz.), semi-sweet chocolate, chop
1/3 c. flour
1/4 tsp. salt
1 c. sugar
4 egg yolks, beaten
2 T. butter
1 T. vanilla
1 graham-cracker crust pie shell

Method

1. Scald 1 ¾ cups milk in a double boiler (
over very low heat), stirring constantly.
2. Add chopped chocolate and continue stir
until the chocolate melts.
3. In a separate bowl, mix flour and remain
milk until smooth. Then add salt and sugar
again until smooth.
4. Add the flour mixture to the milk and
chocolate mixture in double boiler. Cook and
stir over, not in, hot water, for 15 minutes.
5. Pour a small quantity over the beaten egg
yolks. Whisk until smooth.
6. Add the egg mixture to the chocolate mix
in double boiler. Stir and cook the custard fo
minutes.
7. Add butter and whisk until incorporated.
8. Remove from heat. Beat gently until very
smooth. Finish the mixture with the vanilla.
9. Refrigerate the custard for 15 minutes. Pla
plastic wrap on the surface so the custard won
form a skin.
10. Finally pour it into the pie shell and
refrigerate until ready to serve, at least one ho
Finish with whipped cream, if desired.

Cheer Big or Go Home

Support EHS Sports, participate in Orange Rush

Story by: Peter Byers, Staff Writer

HEY YOU GUYS. Yes, you. The kids sitting atop the Orange Rush not cheering. This one is going to sting a little.

Why show up to the sporting events if you aren't going to cheer? Yes, you can come to the game to socialize. But why are you really at the game? You're really at the game to cheer your Tigers onto victory, right? Then do it.

Get off your phone. Your side conversation can wait a little bit. If an Orange Rush leader starts a cheer, then follow their lead and repeat what they're saying. Our student athletes thrive off of us cheering for them during games.

"It definitely gives you an advantage on the field," senior football player Curt Mueller said. "It honestly gets you that much more excited to play the game." We as students need to take pride in our sports and encourage our players.

Right now, I would say we have a weak student section. Even Alton's "birds nest" student section is better than ours. We need to step up our game. I mean after all, we're THE premier high school in the state of Illinois.

Senior quarterback Mick Peddicord explained that he finds it frustrating that our student section is lacking in school pride. "...Although it may serve as a great social gathering, sporting events should be a time to cheer on fellow classmates and support the athletic team playing," Peddicord said. "It not only motivates your team but it's also an intimidation factor for the opponent."

For the time that you're at the game, all I'm asking is for you to cheer. Nobody is too cool to cheer on the best team around.

"We feel the crowd's presence while on the court," senior basketball player Carter Marteeny said. "It can psychologically work against our opponent and have them mess up. Without our students behind us, we don't play as well as a team."

Fans cheer on the football team at a home game.

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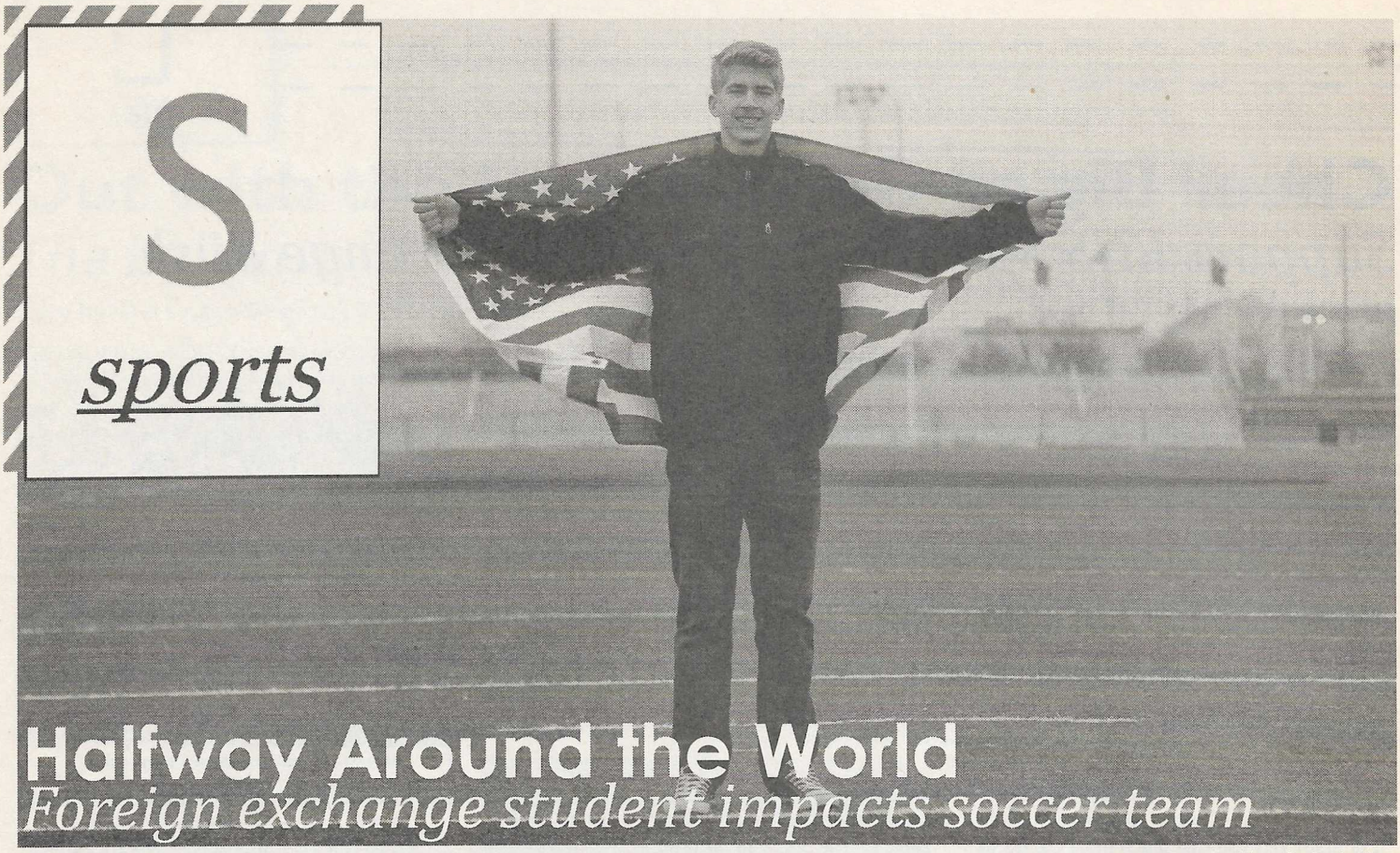

Halfway Around the World

Foreign exchange student impacts soccer team

Photo By Devin Kane

Story by: Zain Pyarali, Sports Editor

SOUTHEAST OF THE Hague in the Netherlands is Ypenburg, a small neighborhood which is home to Edwardsville's very own soccer, or dare I say futbol, player Lucas Jonk. It doesn't matter what country he is in or what you call it, Jonk still loves to play the game.

"In the Netherlands you play with some friends and some teammates because you don't all go to the same school," Jonk said. "But here it is different because you see them in school and it's more like playing with your friends rather than your teammates."

Jonk enjoyed a successful season with the Tiger soccer program as he scored four goals and tallied one assist while playing a key role for the 2014 SWC champions.

After playing for the same club for 12 years in the Netherlands, playing for the Tigers this year was a slight change for Jonk.

"He was shy at first but as the season went on he really became a part of our team and was funny too," senior Landon Paul said. "Getting to know about where he came from and the differences was also very cool because it seemed like we had to teach him something new every day."

Along with his teammates changing, he had to adjust to American game tactics as well.

"The formation is different here, we play a 4-5-1 at the high school and in the Netherlands, we always play a 4-3-3," Jonk said. "Sometimes it's more fun here, but it's always fun playing soccer for me."

Jonk decided to follow in his father's footsteps and come to America just like his father did when he was 16.

"My dad had a really good time here so he told me last year that if I wanted to go then I could," Jonk said. "I didn't really plan on learning a new language and England was a little bit close to home so I thought that I'll go to America."

Jonk scored his first career goal in America in the 67th minute vs Belleville East on Sept. 2 and every time he scores he pays tribute to his home country.

"My first goal was a lot of fun," Jonk said. "My celebration is always the same and there is history behind it. I try to imitate Johan Cruyff, the best Dutch soccer player of all time, but I kind of fail at it."

America has been very accepting to Jonk and he has enjoyed his time here dearly.

"Lucas is an open minded kid that will cover your back no matter what," junior Max Keiffer said. "He will also joke with you a little bit as well, and he's great to be around."

"I miss the Netherlands," Jonk said. "I'm not really homesick though because I love it so much here in America."

Jonk dribbles up the field and away from a defender against Normal Community on Sept. 27

New Faces Don't Change Expectations

Inexperienced squads hope to return to victory

Story by: Bailey Zimmer, Staff Writer

Kyler Davis dribbles the ball down the court.

Mark Smith splits the defense and rises for a layup.

Makenzie Silvey dribbles around a defender.

IT'S NO DEBATE that the boys and girls basketball teams are extremely inexperienced going into the 2014-15 season. Is this a "rebuilding year" for both programs? When you lose four Division 1 basketball players from last year, it's likely that people would call it just that. Although the lack of varsity experience is a similar attribute to both teams, some hoops fans might be surprised.

On the boys side, the team gutted their whole starting five. The "new" Tigers are still trying to find their niche on the basketball court. "Once we start playing together every day, we will figure out what our strengths are," coach Mike Waldo said.

After several games have been played, it is apparent that a great deal of the scoring will be put up by sophomores Mark Smith, AJ Epenesa and Oliver Stephen. The three underclassmen accumulated for 64 percent of the Tigers scoring through the first six games.

"We just have to play hard and listen to coach Waldo in games and practices," Smith said. He further explained that they must continue to be smarter and more mature on the court if they want to get back to the state tournament.

Elsewhere on the court, senior Kyler Davis has handled the point guard position.

"We've really been trying to motivate the younger guys to be more confident on the court," Davis said. He also added that coach Waldo has been telling us to have mental toughness on the court and play hard for the 32 minutes during every game.

The senior scorers, in addition to Davis, include Dan Marinko, who is returning to the floor after cheering in the fan section last season, Jordan Harris, Kendall Edmond and Monty Sharpe.

After performing 4-2 performance so far, the team knows their potential; it's just a matter of time and practice. "I think we are pretty deep and have lots of guys that can play," Marinko said. "...We play defense well too. We will get the offense going better with more practice."

In addition to the boys, the girls team is also extremely young and maybe even more inexperienced. Let's put this in perspective: the squad has two seniors.

All of the speculation around coach Lori Blade's team is that they won't be as successful as past years.

Ms. Blade explained that because the team is so inexperienced, that the coaching staff will have to break down and "coach," which is what the coaching staff is very good at. "We really have to break things down as far as angles and where kids are supposed to be," Ms. Blade explained about what the basics will be.

Underclassmen are the big story to this team. Sophomores Makenzie Silvey and Criste'on Waters and freshmen Rachel Pranger and Kate Martin have scored 245 points combined totaling 81 percent of the scoring for the team.

"We have to continue to stay disciplined and execute on offense and defense," Silvey said. "We are taught to go game speed at practice and know the plays."

Saying that they dominated the Quincy tournament and the first two SWC games would be an understatement. They won by an average margin of 36 points.

Waters said that they have been executing the plays well in the games and the freshmen have been a big help to accomplish the teams undefeated record.

So far, so good for the girls. They improved to 5-0 record on the young season. Could it be another legendary season for girls basketball at Edwardsville? Time will tell, however, they are on the right path.

The story is similar for both teams: limited experience. We will see how both teams play throughout the year, but it looks like both programs will continue to win.

Bring the Spirit Back to St. Louis

Does St. Louis have what it takes to house an NBA team?

Story by: Drew Bradley, Staff Writer

IN 1974, THE Spirits of St. Louis of the American Basketball Association became the first basketball franchise based in the city of St. Louis, playing their home games at the legendary St. Louis Arena. However, when the NBA merged with the ABA in 1976, only four teams from the ABA would be added to the NBA, with the rest terminating their operations. The New York Nets, the Denver Nuggets, the San Antonio Spurs, and the Indiana Pacers lived on, but powerhouse teams like the Spirits and the Kentucky Colonels fell short. This left St. Louis with only a brief taste of basketball, and sadly, nothing more.

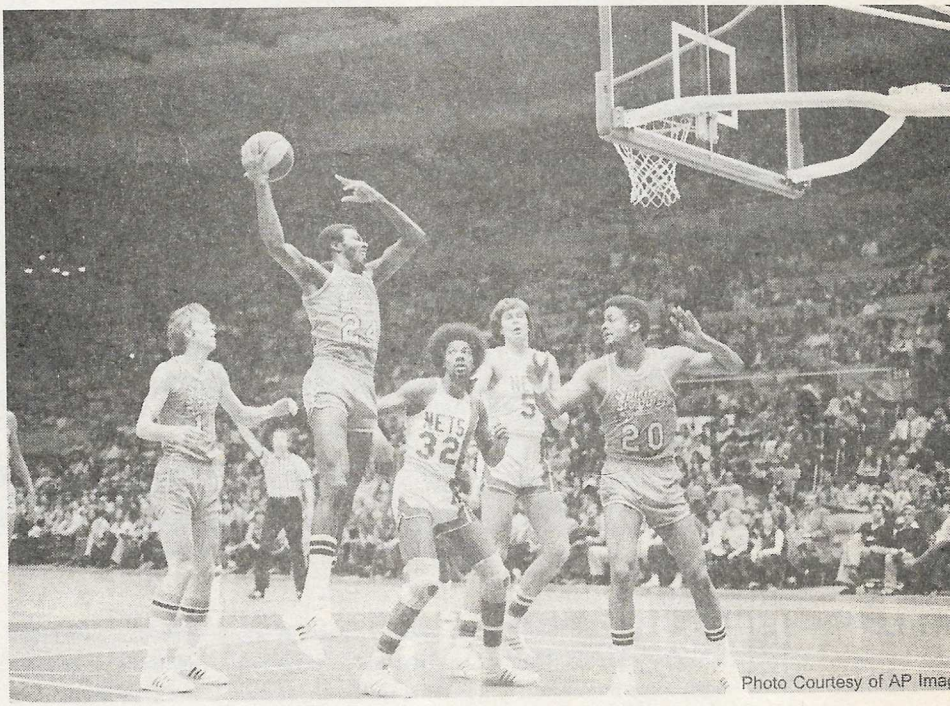

Photo Courtesy of AP Imag

Marvin Barnes (24) Spirits of St. Louis, has the rebound in first period against the New York Nets in Uniondale, New York on Jan. 3, 1975. From left: Gus Garard, St. Louis; Barnes; Julius Erving, New York Nets; Billy Paultz, New York Nets; and Maurice Lucas of St. Louis.

Fast-forward to 2014. St. Louis is a thriving sports city, with the Cardinals, Blues and Rams. The Cardinals are said to have the most loyal fans in baseball, and with Busch Stadium packed for every game, it's hard to disagree.

Though the Blues are the oldest team in the NHL without a Stanley Cup, an elite roster backed by screaming fans show that this trend is unlikely to keep up. For the past decade, the Rams have been pitiful. They're starting to show promise with a corps of young players and a mean defensive line, but the team still needs a few years and a quarterback before they're a contending team. Unfortunately for St. Louis, Rams owner Stan Kroenke has plans of relocating the team back to Los Angeles after this season.

> **"I feel like St. Louis would love their team and good money would be brought into the economy."**

The Rams also ranked last in the Forbes NFL Team Valuation list, with a total value of $930 million while generating the least revenue; $250 million. For a market as big as the NFL, these numbers are terrible, even worse than the troubled city of Detroit. If the Rams leave, should St. Louis replace them with an NBA franchise?

"Oh yeah, without a doubt," EHS assistant basketball coach Allen Duncan said. However, since the NBA market is much smaller than the NFL, there would be significantly less money collected compared to the Rams. But that'd still be better than none once the Rams are gone.

To help put into perspective of just how much a St. Louis-based NBA team could produce, the Milwaukee Bucks, whose city has a population of only 60,000 more than St. Louis, are valued at $405 million while earning $109 million in revenue. However, the Bucks' league-worst rec last year dealt a heavy blow to their attendanc which negatively contributed to their revenue amount. If a St. Louis NBA team could win, then revenue could double, or even triple, tha Milwaukee's.

"It would be really good for the community," said senior Aaron Jackson. "I feel like St. Lou would love their team and good money would brought into the economy." Jackson is right, a good money is better than no money.

Not only would the team be loved by the fans in St. Louis, but it would also benefit local businesses. Bars could show games, especially prime-time games, to their customers, which in turn would potentially boom their busines generating more revenue.

Local sporting goods stores could sell the tea products, such as jerseys and T-shirts. Local business commercials could even use the tean

star player(s) in their ads, which might cause consumers to buy a product.

Every city loves community service, and the team would bring just that. An organization called NBA Cares works with the NBA and helps teams to reach out to improve their local communities. NBA Cares could work with the St. Louis team to help build a new playground with a court, for example, which would give kids a place to play, ultimately enhancing the overall community.

"In a struggling economy, it would help bring needed revenue to surrounding businesses, as well as recognition to the city," said senior Matt Zielonko.

Like the love given to the Cardinals and Blues, fans around the city would also welcome their beloved hoopers warmly. Silky smooth jump-shots, nasty crossovers and eye-popping alley-oops would resurrect to life, helping to create a new and improved competitive spirit of St. Louis.

The St. Louis Arena was occasionally used by the St. Louis Hawks and was home to the ABA's Spirits of St. Louis for three years from 1974-1976. It did not host a professional basketball team again.

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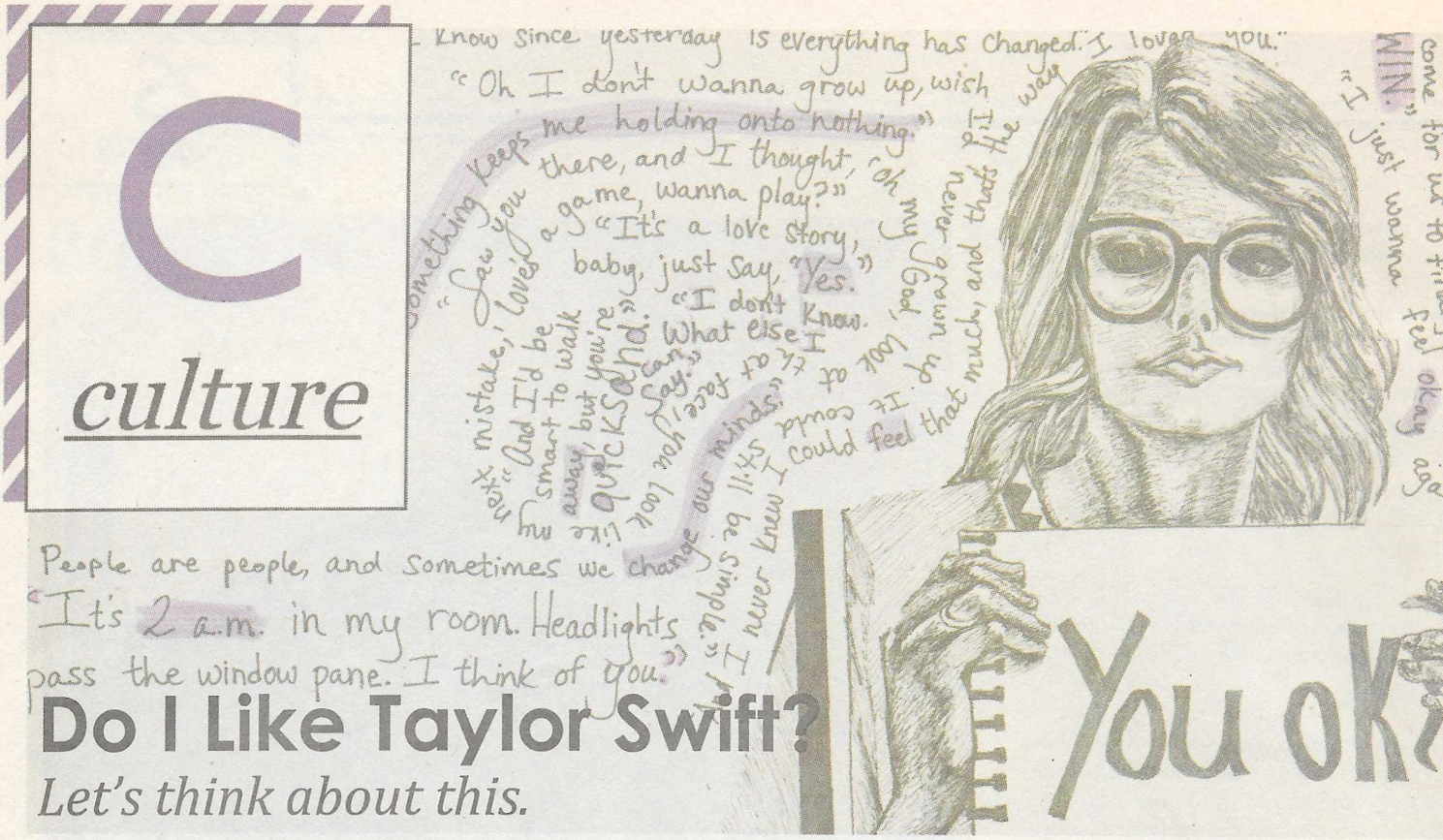
"Oh I don't wanna grow up, wish me holding onto nothing."
"It's a love story, baby, just say, "Yes."
"I don't know. What else I can say."
"I never knew I could feel that much, and that's the way it's supposed to be."
"I just wanna feel okay"
You ok

Do I Like Taylor Swift?

Let's think about this.

story by: Emily Ash, Co-Editor-in-Chief; **art by** Sam Jueckstock, Views Editor

IT STARTED LAST weekend, on a car ride home from my grandparents' house. The radio scanner picked up a 10-second clip of Taylor Swift's most recent single, "Shake It Off," prompting my dad to offer his two cents about the not-so-country-anymore songstress. "You know, I really like what she did with this music video," he said. "It's well-produced, fun, and high-energy."

Keep in mind that my dad cuts his own hair because he's too cheap to go to a barber, his favorite jacket is probably over 25 years old, and his music collection is an extensive range of reggae and buckwheat zydeco *cassette tapes.* Howard Ash is a certifiable *old dude,* so the fact that he's even watching Taylor Swift music videos gave me pause.

As a photographer who dabbles in video production, my dad is the closest thing my family has to an authority on art. He also works at a university, so for him to hear a Taylor Swift song is entirely within the realm of possibility.

But the fact that my father saw some artistic merit in the singer's latest visual forced me to reevaluate my longtime affair with T-Swizzle, one that started in my little cousin Katie's bedroom, where we became video producers in our own right, filming iPod lip synch videos to "You Belong With Me." Our primary cinematographic effect was flipping her bedroom light switch on and off to Swift's twangy vocals.

Katie lived in Central Illinois, which was as good as the Deep South to me, a girl who had spent all 10 of her years in downtown Chicago. Sort of like how Taylor's undeniably pop sound was as good as classic country to a girl raised on that aforementioned buckwheat zydeco. Swift's romanticization of small-town high school love and life was exciting to me. Even though I knew it was too sweet and blonde-locked to be true, I felt "Fifteen." I felt alive.

Taylor Swift was also my first music video icon. "Picture to Burn" was hilarious and unruly and perfect, save that eyebrow-raising, possibly homophobic line that got snipped from the music video. "Fifteen" was, in all of its green-screened glory, the very mold in which I cast my expectations for high school. And I'm not gonna lie: "Fearless" will always top the list of Music I Will Always Listen To. Yeah, this was the TSwift I loved.

> **Taylor Swift is the human embodiment of a Ked: soft, cottony, adored by white people, goes with everything.**

And I guess that's the perfect segue into the topic Taylor often catches flack for: most, if not all, of her songs are about having boyfriends. I'm going to spend as little time as I possibly can on this, because too many syllables and brain cells have already been wasted by Hollywood news reporters on Taylor Swift's supposedly lengthy laundry list of exes.

To all the people who make jokes about Taylor Swift having a lot of boyfriends: Stop. You are neither funny, nor original. Your tweets are not as hilarious as you think they are. The same goes for people who make fun of Swift for having a flat butt or being "not country enough." And no I will never forgive Joe Jonas for that voicemail breakup. Neither should Taylor.

Some of Swift's lyrics are a bit cringe-worthy. I'm not referring to the recent string of blog posts inviting readers to guess whether a line is cut from "1989" or a 90's emo band. I'm talking about the distinct difference between *having* boyfriends and *needing* boyfriends, a line TSwift seems to cross all too often.

And you don't have to listen too closely to pick up on the internalized misogynies of some of Swift's hits (Was Abigail's virginity *really* "everything she had"? What makes T-shirts and sneakers inherently purer and more desirable than high heels and short skirts?).

Swift's more minor offenses include her confusing and hilarious friendship with writer Lena Dunham and the fact that, after spending 13 months in New York and $12 million on a TriBeCa property, she has somehow become the

Big Apple's ambassador. I'm not a New Yorker, and even I'm angry about that.

I like to hate Taylor Swift in the same bird-printed, bespectacled, oxford-wearing way I hate the FOX television series "New Girl." Maybe I'm just projecting my anger with Taylor for leading me down a path of false hope – one that instilled in me a hearty conviction that my "small town life" would consist of less bigotry and more next-door neighbor romantics á la "You Belong With Me," but if I hear one more morning show newscaster babble on about Taylor's "quirky" personality ("She bakes cookies in her pajamas! She embroiders pillows and writes her own songs! Ahh!"), I will go into orbit.

Pardon my language, but what Taylor has been up to lately is totally meta.

But then I remember something else my dad said about Taylor on that car ride: "I think they choose to play her music at university events because she's unobjectionable and easy to listen to." It's true; it was a genius marketing move on Keds's part to pick Swift as their spokesperson in 2012. Taylor is the human embodiment of a Ked: soft, cottony, adored by white people, goes with everything. Singing along to "Our Song" in the car is as comfortable and second-nature as wearing this basic cotton lace-up—a standby that my mom probably won't object to. Can you really hate on a girl for capitalizing on an aesthetic that is, if anything, *too* relatable?

Back in the car with my dad, the radio scanner picked up a snippet of "Love Story," a ballad that is now an artifact of the Taylor Swift who could write a song entitled "Love Story" without a hint of irony or bitterness. Nowadays, Taylor is actutely aware of all the people who talk crap on her romantics, and she couldn't care less about what they say.

Instead of writing songs for her lovers of past and present Taylor is writing to her critics on "1989." She's roughed-up and even a little cynical on songs like "Blank Space," where she draws an elaborate caricature of her boy-crazy self—one that can't be appreciated by guys like Howard Ash, but resonates perfectly with girls like me, who have grown up with Taylor.

She's probably laughing at those talking heads who host roundtable discussions to figure out whether they like her. She's probably laughing at me. Taylor takes all this white noise about her music videos, her haircuts and how many boyfriends is *too many*, chews it up, and spits out multi-million dollar records.

Taylor is so in tune with what her cortege and critiques think of her, she even showed up to a New York restaurant wearing a t-shirt reading "No, it's Becky," a thinly-veiled reference to a popular online joke about the superstar. Pardon my language, but what Taylor has been up to lately is totally *meta*. And honestly, I'm loving it.

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The Rebellion Ingites a New Beginning

'Mockingjay: Part 1' takes theaters by storm

Story by: Devin Kane, Life Editor

FIRE HAS CAUGHT and the revolution has begun.

"Mockingjay: Part 1" is everything you could want and more.

Katniss Everdeen, played flawlessly by Jennifer Lawrence, is recovering from back to back Hunger Games tours. Suffering from apparent confusion and heart break, Katniss is taunted with propaganda videos of interviews from the capitol of her partner Peeta Mellark, played by Josh Hutcherson.

Peeta was captured by the Capitol after District 13 could not rescue him from the games. In the videos Peeta, who is brain washed by the capitol, calls for District 13 to lay down their weapons. Katniss volunteers to go beyond District 13 boundaries with a camera crew to film its own series of propaganda.

They first visit District 12 only to find that what was once their home is now just rubble of stone and bones surrounded by small fires still burning from the bombing delivered by the Capitol. Katniss begs for the people to rise up and fight the Capitol. And they listen. She visits other districts to comfort injured rebel soldiers and encourage them and others. She speaks confidently, encouraging the revolution.

Photo courtesy of Flickr

An appropriately dark movie pins Peeta and Katniss against each other on the airwaves, with District 13 combating every Capitol propaganda episode with one of the Mockingjay.

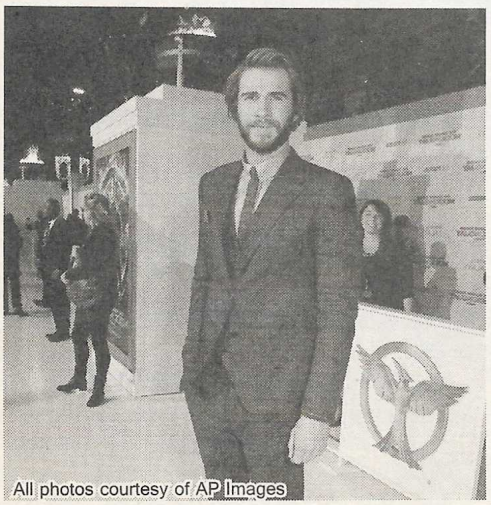
Each war scene has you clinging on to your seat wondering if all who left will return. It seemed as if every time the duo and their crew left the safety of District 13 to film a video, they were met with enemy fire. But don't worry. Beetee, played by Jeffrey Wright, a victor from District 3 with skills in technology, rigged up some exploding arrows for Katniss to shoot out of a new bow and she took out two Capitol planes at once. Realistic? Probably not, but this is the Hunger Games.

In "Mockingjay: Part 1" we see the late Philip Seymour Hoffman's character, Plutarch Heavensbee, make the transition from Capitol game maker to taking on an important leadership role as the voice of the District 12 escapees in District 13. Hoffman played Heavensbee amazingly. He seamlessly pulled o the transition from a slightly minor to a major character.

Upon the death of Hoffman, Lionsgate release that Hoffman had completed all of his scenes "Mockingjay: Part 1" and all in "Part 2" except "one major, emotional scene." This leads us ba to speculating about the coming movie. How Francis Lawrence conquer this obstacle?

Along with the spark of a revolution, "Mockingjay: Part 1" sparked the beginning of Lawrence's singing career. "Hanging tree," a song Katniss sings in the movie, has climbed t iTunes top 100 charts. Ranking No. 3, "Hangi Tree" only follows "Blank Space" by Taylor Sw and "Uptown Funk" by Mark Ronson featurin Bruno Mars.

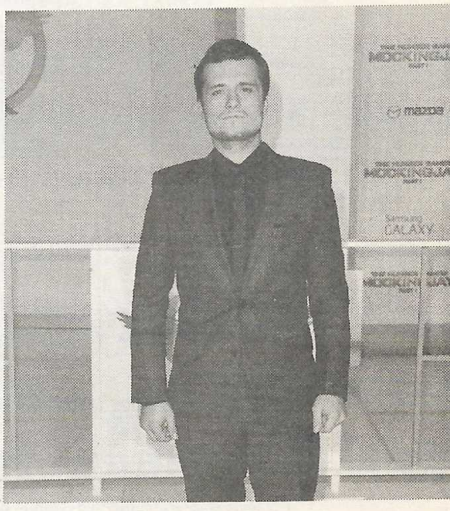
The date hasn't been set for the premiere of the final movie, "Mockingjay: Part 2," but the countdown has begun. Real or not real?



All photos courtesy of AP Images

Liam Hemsworth at the world premiere for "Mockingjay: Part 1."

Jennifer Lawrence at the world premiere for "Mockingjay: Part 1."



Josh Hutcherson at the World Premiere for "Mockingjay: 1."

'Talking is Hard' But Listening Is Easy

Walk the Moon revamps '80s pop music

Story by: Maggie Mackin, Staff Writer

SINCE THE FIRST single "Shut Up and Dance" was released from the upcoming album, it has been climbing charts. Fans of Ohio-based quartet, Walk the Moon, have been sitting on the edges of their seats anxiously awaiting the release of the rest of "Talking is Hard." On Monday Nov. 24, a week before its scheduled release, they surprised everyone by releasing the album on Spotify for free streaming.

In comparison to their self-titled album, which is comprised mostly of revamped songs from their self-released album "I Want! I Want!," "Talking is Hard" is quite a bit more electronic sounding, with bits and pieces similar to it here and there, specifically on "Sidekick."

With one full listen of the album, it's easy to hear many of the '80s influences. It effortlessly resembles artists like Duran Duran, Tears for Fears and The Cure. '80s synth pop meets today's pop. It takes me back to the early '80s, and I wasn't even alive then.

In an attempt to write an anthem, Walk the Moon produced the third track on the record, "Shut Up and Dance." It even inspired the title of their United States run, Shut Up and Tour. At these shows they played songs from the upcoming record including "Down in the Dumps" and "Spend your $$$," as well as three others.

Producer Tim Pagnotta (Neon Trees, The Summer Set) and mixer Neal Avron (Weezer, New Found Glory) combined efforts with the members of Walk the Moon to make the album as exceptional as possible. And they did just that.

Setting high standards for the remainder of the songs, "Different Colors" opens the record with a solid drum beat provided by Sean Waugaman and Nick Petricca's vocals. Jumping in are the rest of the instruments including Walk the Moon's soon to be trademark synthesizers. Throughout the majority of the album, the electronic sound of the synths is prevalent.

Differing from many of the songs on the album, "Avalanche" holds a really clear and crisp

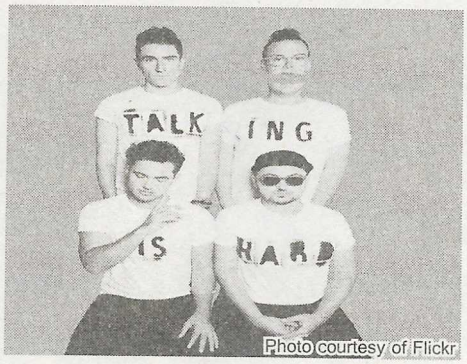


Photo courtesy of Flickr

Photo courtesy of AP Images

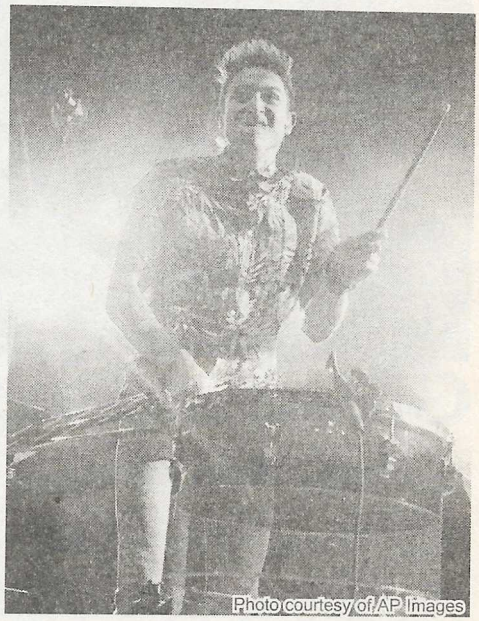


Photo courtesy of AP Images

Clockwise from top left: The album cover for "Talking is Hard" by Walk the Moon. The band took six weeks of strictly writing to produce the album. Singer Nick Petricca performs at Pier Six Pavilion in Baltimore. Walk the Moon poses for a photo at radio 104.5 Winter Jam in 2013.

sound. It's less electronic and more indie, but still sounds like Walk the Moon. Lead singer Petricca describes it as a great driving song, and hopes people will listen to it while driving on the highway.

The two most relatable songs on the album are "Portugal" and "Down in the Dumps."

"Portugal" holds an extraordinary amount of sadness yet a lot of hope in its lyrics. For the majority of the song, the vocals are buried under the sounds of the instruments, including the ever-present sound of the synth. Even with fast paced instruments, the vocals somehow remain slow. If a song is capable of giving you the chills, you know it's a good one.

"Down in the Dumps" is about not letting anything get you upset. "It's about sucking it up," Petricca said in "Talking is Hard-Track by Track Commentary." In this recording he also describes the song as futuristic sounding. "It's one of the songs that we really see as one that defines what new Walk the Moon is supposed to sound like and I love that defiance in it," he said.

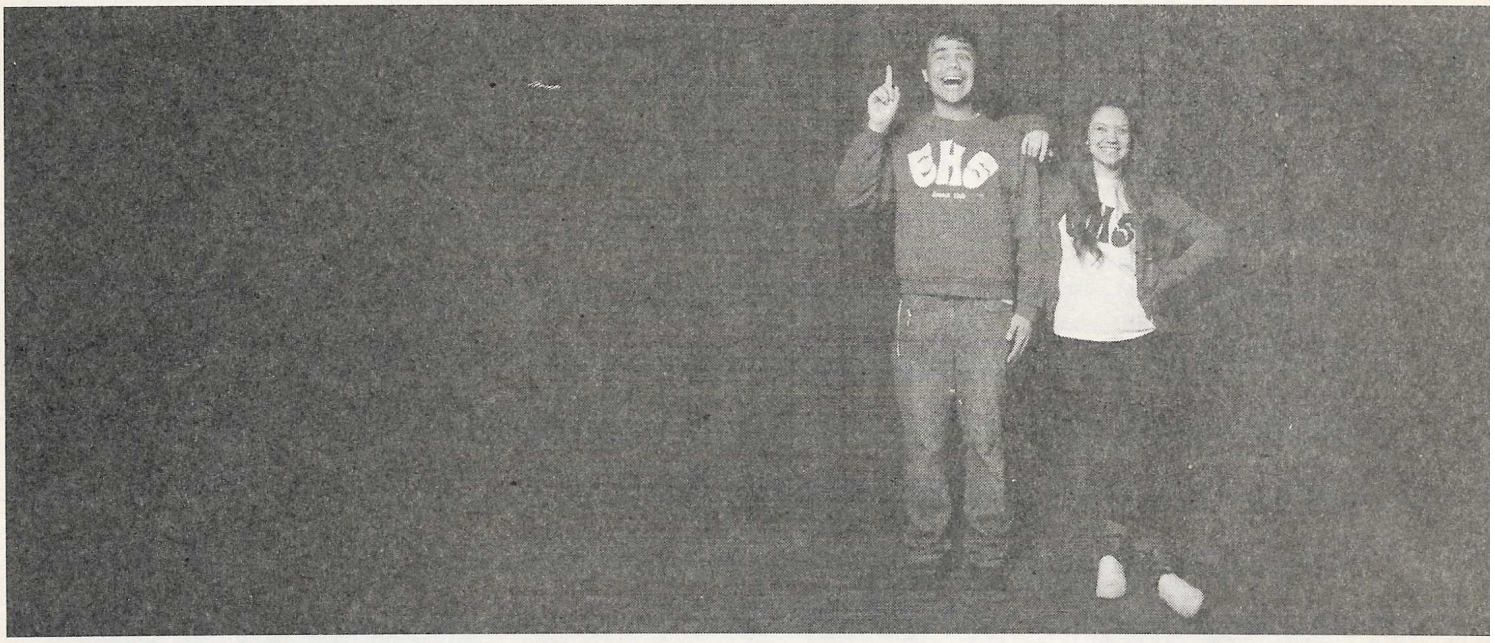
"Spend Your $$$" has been one of my favorite Walk the Moon songs since I heard them perform it at The Ready Room in October. The falsetto Petricca carries is incredible throughout the verses and closing line.

The closing track to the album, "Aquaman," is clear and crisp. Although I'm not positive that it was intended, the song sounds like water.

It's very pretty and slow, and finishes out the 80's themed record. Not only is it one of my favorites on "Talking is Hard," it's also Petricca's favorite song on the album.

Also prevailing on many of the tracks is incredible bass lines from Kevin Ray, which are displayed on "Sidekick," and guitar solos that could kill from Eli Maiman, easily heard in the solo in "Down in the Dumps."

Officially released on Dec. 2, "Talking is Hard" captivated listeners everywhere. Unfortunately for fans in the St. Louis area, the closest date on the appropriately named Talking is Hard Tour is at the House of Blues in Chicago.



Go Behind the Curtains with Jayke and Jill

A look into the student-produced Christmas show...

Story by: Devin Kane, Life Editor

They have been acting together since sixth grade in Liberty Middle School's performance of "Take Five." Ever since then, they knew that come their senior year they would be directing the EHS drama club Christmas show–together.

The Christmas show is written and directed by senior drama club members hand selected by director Kate Motley. This year the show was directed by a duo that has been acting together for the past seven years.

Seniors Jayke White and Jill Burroughs wanted to direct the Christmas show together before they were even in high school.

"This is something Jill and I have wanted to do since our eighth grade year and we've been really excited for it" White said.

Mrs. Motley approached White last December and asked him if he would be willing to write and direct the Christmas show for this year. White asked Burroughs if she would be willing to help take on such a big task.

"I was super excited...there was some squealing and I was just really happy," Burroughs said.

By Easter, the two had the script finished. "It's something that can be done at the very last minute or be done quickly and I wanted to get it done quickly and well," White said.

Burroughs and White were responsible for making sure the cast of 28 drama club members knew everything needed to preform after only three and a half weeks of rehearsals.

The two learned time management and how to run an efficient rehearsal from working under Mrs. Motley, which has helped them deal with the small amount of rehearsal time.

"That's probably one of the biggest things I've learned from her," White said.

The two also had to work as a team to utilize every minute of rehearsal.

"One of us has to be staying on script in case someone forgets their line the other taking notes the entire time," White said.

Just two weeks ago, Burroughs and White were acting under Mrs. Motley in EHS's production of "Celebration" alongside those who they were directing in the Christmas show.

"The hardest part is having to be a director to your peers, someone that you are used to just being equal to you are now placed above," White said. "They aren't use to having to listen to wha you say and you aren't use to telling them what to do. That was hard."

They credit their success as directors to the one who has been directing them since they were ju freshmen.

"She's [Motley] the best director I've ever worke with 10 or 12 over the past seven years," White said. "The way she handles things...she gets them done very quickly and I really appreciate the amount of control she has over her cast and so I'm able to take notes from her to be able to control my own." Burroughs agrees.

"I find myself saying some of the exact same things she says when she's directing," Burrough said."There is so much more that goes into directing, I'm watching it and I know exactly what she means know."

Students from all 10 District 7 elementary schools attended the Christmas show over the course of three days. The cast performed the pl eight times within the three day period.

Students also performed the show once on Saturday, Dec. 6, for the the public to come an enjoy.

Ninja elves, reindeer, Santa and the abominable snowman all took the stage under White and Burroughs' direction to bring students the annual kick-off to the holidays.

The show this year was about a mailman named Larry and his job is to take all of the letters to Santa up to the North Pole.

On one of his trips up to the North Pole, he has a run-in with the abominable snowman who steals all of the letters and makes them into bad letters so everyone is put on the naughty list and given coal so everyone is mad at Santa. It's up to Larry the mailman, one of Santa's reindeer and the snow princess to make the letters right and save Christmas.

The show typically takes a "Christmas is going to be ruined" approach, but White and Burroughs decided to go their own route.

"We didn't want to go with the typical Christmas is going to be ruined but more of Santa's job is on the line," Burroughs said.

With praises galore from all 10 elementary schools in District 7, this year's Christmas show was a must-see for all ages.

Photo by Shawn Semmler

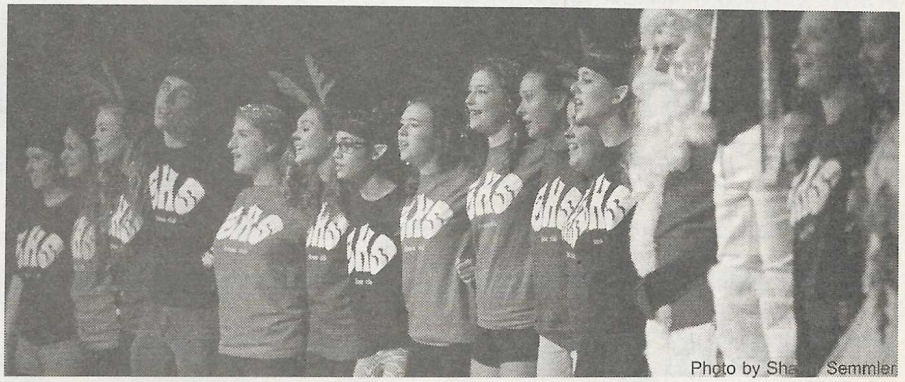


Photo by Shawn Semmler

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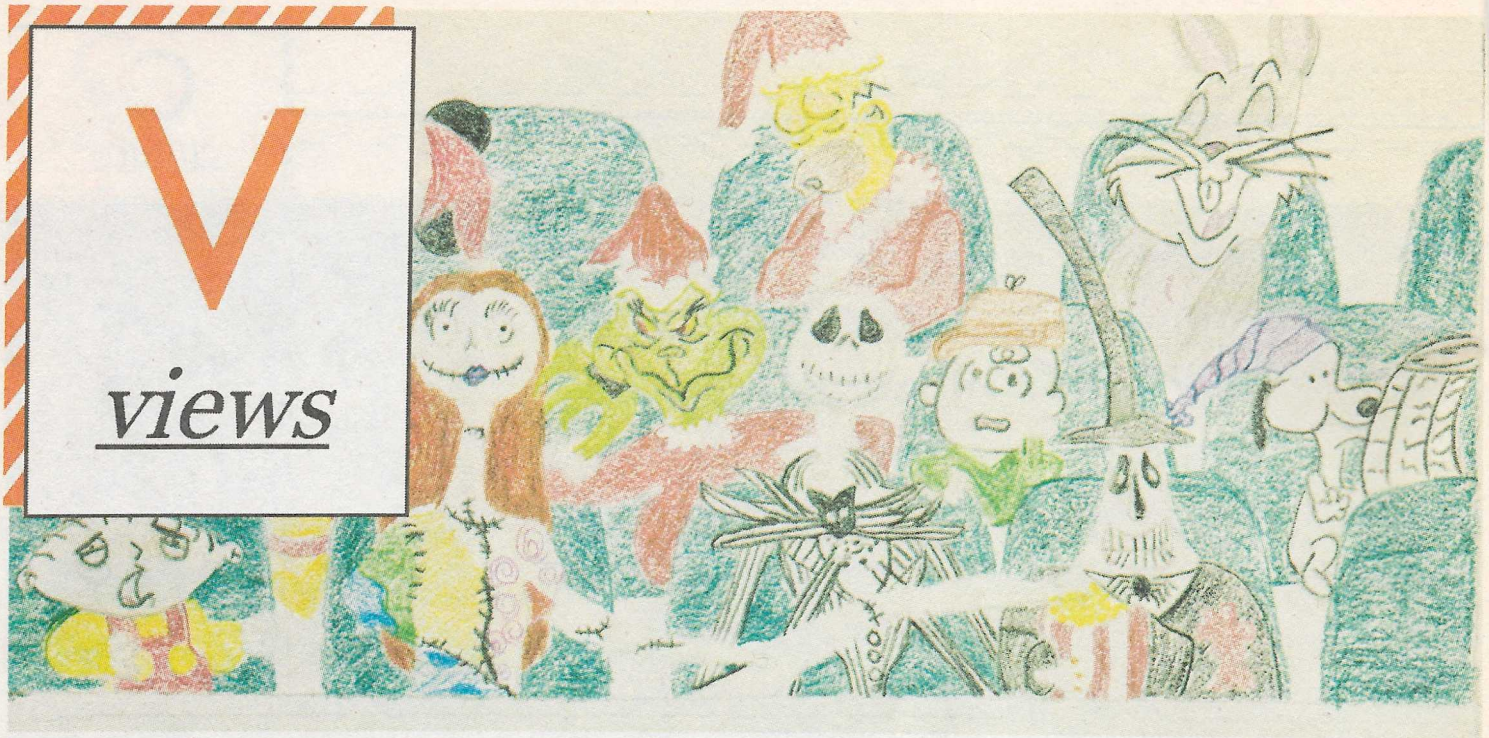

Motion Picture Perfect: Don't Annoy Me

I can't get a bang for my buck without silence

Story by: Sam Jueckstock, Views Editor; **Art by**: Eryn and Eden Coppersmith, staff writers

AS YOU WALK through the dark corridor, your eye is automatically drawn to the main attraction: the giant projector screen. You walk up the rope-lit stairs and meticulously choose your seat. With popcorn in hand and drink at your side, you're ready for your film to start. But not even halfway through the movie, the dude to your left won't get off his phone and the mother sitting behind you doesn't bother to control her seat kicking kid.

You've encountered these annoying people before. The people who munch their popcorn too loudly, the people who won't stop adding their (unwanted) commentary, the people who get up and make a scene trying to shuffle their way out of the theater, the people who don't control their rowdy kids. There are plenty of movie-goers who would love to sit in solitude and plug in to the movie, so allow them to do so. Here are several ways to be courteous at the big screen.

When you're in the theater, please don't use your phone. I understand that all the advertisements preceding the movie can be boring, so phone use during that time is okay. But once the lights go down, I expect the full movie experience that I paid $10 for. When you use your phone, there's a light drawing my attention more toward you and less toward what I really want to be devoting my eyes to—the movie.

Also, make sure you don't converse with your gal pal or your bro or whomever you're seeing the movie with. Keeping the chit chat to a minimum will surely reduce the unnecessary noise in the theater as well as my growing headache. If you can't handle movie seeing with a friend, then you're better off going alone.

What's with the loud smacking of lips? And I'm not only talking about food, either. I don't know how this is so hard, but please use the manners your mom apparently didn't teach you and close your mouth when you chew. And if you can't keep your lips to yourself, then see the previous paragraph.

Try to remember that the main reason I came here was to see the movie, and I don't want you to leave the theater in the middle of it. Don't obstruct my view. Just stay in your seat like you're supposed to, because it's far too dark to be shuffling across the aisle like a bull in a china shop. The last thing I want is for you to trip over me and fall and hurt someone. I know you have to go to the bathroom, but can't it wait? I'm sure you've held it for longer than two hours before.

Speaking of using the restroom, don't get snacks that will turn you into the next Niagra Falls. If you can't handle the XL Dr. Pepper, then it should be simple–don't buy it. It shouldn't be legal for someone to consume that much soda in the constraints of two hours. Do you know how many toxins are entering your body? There is no need to overindulge, especially with the oversized popcorn bags available. There's probably enough trans fat in one bag of movie theater popcorn to give a grown man about seven heart attacks, which, again, would probably obstruct my view of the movie.

When it's time for you to purchase reasonable snacks, don't take forever to order your food. There's a long line for a reason; use this to your advantage. Have your order ready to go by the time you reach the counter. Don't stand there with a bewildered look on your face and drool dripping down your chin and say "uh, I don't know what I want yet..." Don't be that person. You had plenty of time, and because of you, I don't have plenty of time anymore. My movie is about to start.

These guidelines should get you through the movie, but what about afterwards? I promise that there is no need to clap after a movie. I know the cinematography was stunning and the casting flawless, but this isn't Broadway. The actors can't hear you. It'll be okay, I promise.

By following these commandments, you're guaranteed to make it out of the theater without other movie goers giving you dirty looks or booing you away.

Monstrous Movie Taboos: What Annoys You?

"Clapping while laughing."
Aaron Voss, senior

"When your brightness is up all the way."
Meredith Silver, senior

"Talking too loud."
Terri Colby, EHS bookkeeper

"Kicking seats."
Lindsey Toenyes, senior

"When people use their cell phones."
Jordan Conrad, senior

"People chomping their food the whole time."
Alyssa Schmitt, senior

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Ins and Outs of High School Recruiting

Five-step process of finding a school for you

Story by: Peter Byers, Staff Writer

MANY ATHLETES FROM Edwardsville are skilled enough to compete at the college level. But do you know how to go through the recruiting process? This is a five step process to help you find the school for you.

Register properly

This is the most important step in the whole process. If you do not go through the NCAA Clearing House, you cannot participate in Division I or Division II athletics. The Eligibility Center makes sure that you have not been paid as a professional athlete and will help get your contact information out to coaches. You will find all the tools you need to be NCAA eligible on ncaaeligibilitycenter.com.

Have a realistic mindset

Being realistic with your options is very key in the recruiting process. You have to assess your talent level as an athlete realistically. Also, recognize if the school has the major that you are interested in. Contact schools in the area if you're looking to stay close to home. If you're looking for a change in scenery, whether that's to the East Coast or West Coast, e-mail coaches from there. Another helpful tip is to talk to your coaches and see if they have any connections with college coaches that may benefit you.

Get your name out to coaches

A very common mistake that is costly to recruits is waiting for schools to come to you. Do not be afraid to talk to coaches. Coaches prefer confident student-athletes.

E-mail coaches early and often. An introductory email may include when to contact you, why you're interested in that particular school, whether you have been cleared through the NCAA Eligibility Center and maybe a couple questions about their college.

Scholarships and fitting in

After you talk to the coaches and find out where schools you will take your official visits, keep in mind that you only get five official visits. Once you have the schools narrowed down, choose the best school for you. You will know when you find the school that best fits you. You will 'click', so to speak with all the coaches and athletes already on the team. Do not be fooled by college coaches though; see past them as coaches and look into their personalities to see which ones are genuine.

Have fun with the recruiting process

The process as a whole can either be a stressful time in your life or one that you work hard on. When you take your official visits have fun on them. When you pick the school where you will be attending soak it all up. Soak up all the attention because it only happens once.

2015 Recruiting Class Ranks

Number of Recruits from ESPN's Recruiting Nation

#3
20 Commits

#4
22 Commits

#2
24 Commits

#5
21 Commits

#1
21 Commits

#2
4 Commits

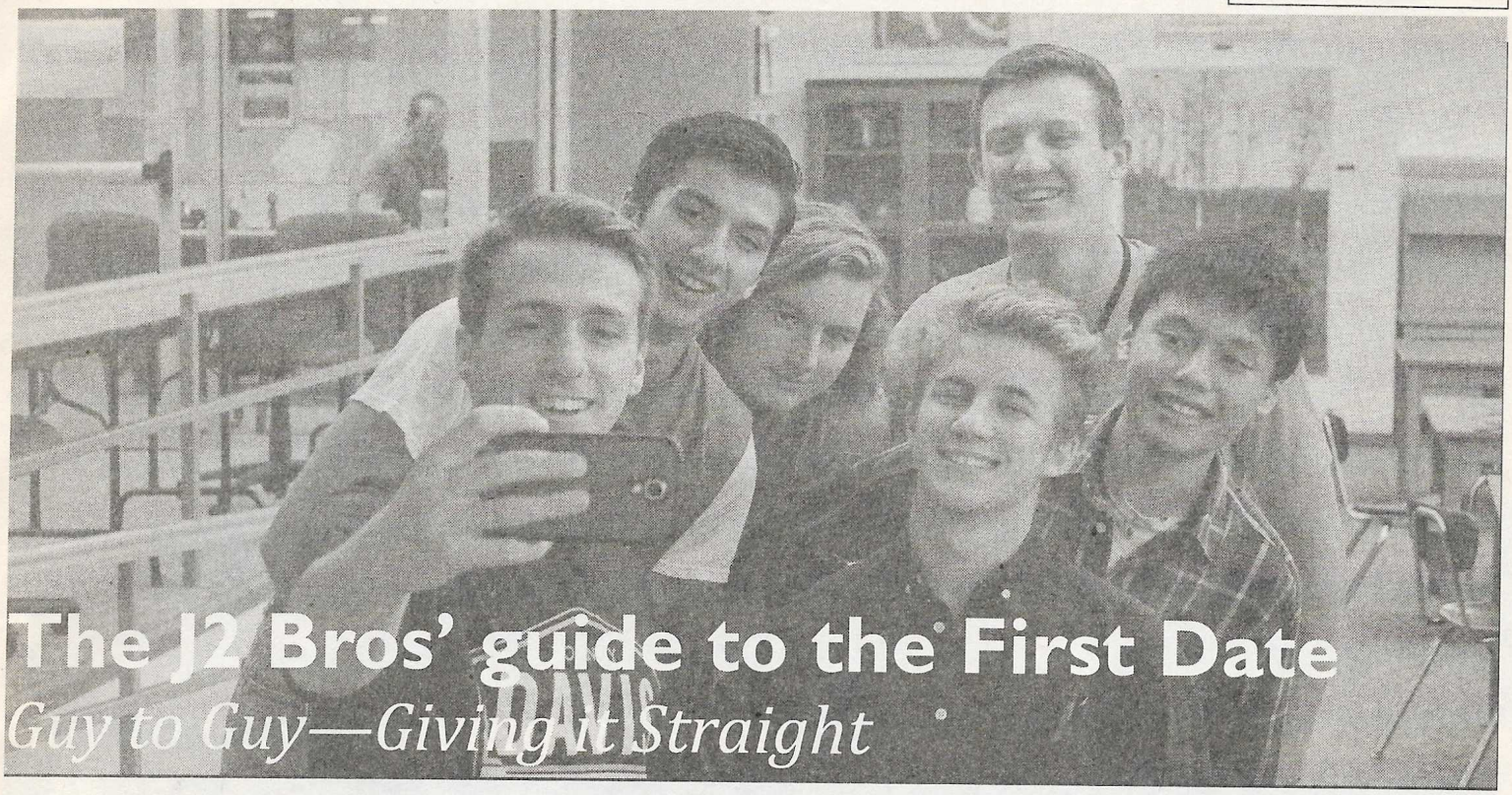
#1
3 Commits

#3
4 Commits

#4
4 Commits

#5
4 Commits

All photos courtesy of AP Images



The J2 Bros' guide to the First Date

Guy to Guy—Giving it Straight

Story By: J2 Bros Editorial Staff

YOU'VE MASTERED THE ways of the Snapchat, and you've managed not only to consistently snap her, but you've made it into her top three friends. Once friend-zoned, you have abolished such boundaries. You're ready to move to the next step, but unfortunately the J2 Bros left you hanging. Fear not my friend, fear not. Follow this guide, and you'll be all right for the first date and, hopefully, several more.

What to Wear

Most of all with fashion, it's important to be yourself and stick with your normal style. After all there's a reason she agreed to a date. It's our job to make sure you are you, just a better looking you. The most important part is your pants. It's simple. If you put on sweat pants—where are you going? The gym? Burger King? While jeans can be pretty universal, we suggest always throwing on a pair of khakis.

Think about it, if you wear jeans then you're good to go for most places, but there are still a number of nicer venues where you'll look underdressed. When you put on khakis, you're practically putting on a fresh suit. You can go anywhere, do anything. Don't worry about being overdressed.

"It shows that the guy actually cares if he gets dressed up," senior Julia Hannon said.

Select a Place

Deciding where to take your date says much about you. And yes, you decide the first date. The "Idk what do you wanna do" text doesn't exactly show a whole lot of confidence or creativity. You could go the easy route, but we suggest you try something new.

Going to eat then to a movie isn't just cliché, but also can cost over $45 if you're not careful. Ladies, this isn't to say you're not worth it, but you can be expensive and a $45 spent on a cliché date isn't the wisest idea.

"You can't brag about your guy if he only takes you on boring dates," said junior Emily Roberson.

So, guys, don't be afraid to try something new. You'll be amazed at what is within a 30 minute radius of Edwardsville: indoor rock climbing (Upper Limits), apple picking (Liberty Orchard), Christmas lights (Christmas Wonderland), ice skating (Forest Park), star gazing (St. Louis Science Center), Victorian Christmas (Lebanon, Ill.) and more.

Be a Gentleman

It's not that hard guys. Pick her up. Go up to the door and knock. The "I'm here" text so that she comes out to your car is some bush-league stuff—you're better than that. Open the car door for her. Give her the AUX cord. It may not be your type of fire but it's her type—that's what matters.

Once you get there, open the door for her. Pull out the seat for her—the whole 9 yards. Once you are seated, take notes of the little things. Give her compliments. She deserves them. You MUST pick up the bill; do not let her pay. When you're done eating, continue to open doors for her and let her go first. Last but not least, get her home on time. You don't want mom and dad being upset with you after only the first date.

Locking Down Date No. 2

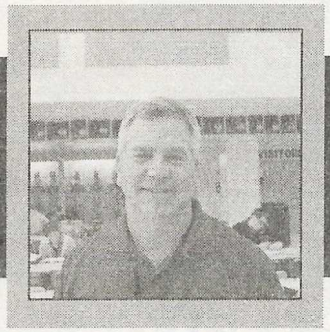
One thing you need to keep in mind through the night is not to get too ahead of yourself. Easy tiger, don't get handsy on the first date.

"I hate when boys try to hold my hand on the first date," said senior Isabella Lilley. "I feel like they're trying to claim me."

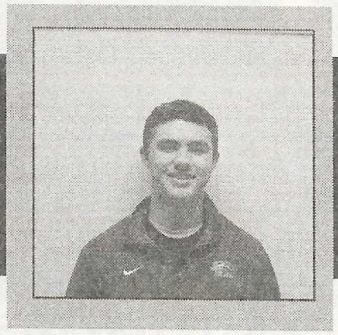
Now, this is not to say you don't end the date with a comfortable kiss, but you've got to read the situation. Don't try to force something that's not ready. You're not Bill Murray, and this isn't "Groundhog Day"—there's always tomorrow. Above all the advice, just be yourself. The J2 Bros want you to spread your wings. You've listened to our advice. You've made it to her top three. You've taken her on your first date. Now, fly my good friend—spread those wings and fly.

Question of the Quarter:

What's your favorite holiday tradition?



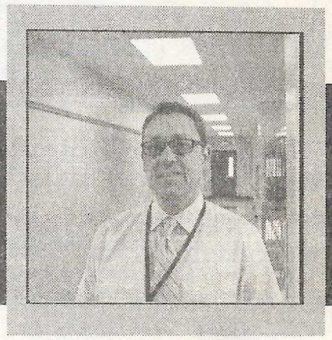
"The Christmas Eve party, seeing the whole family."
-Mr. Steven Hawkings



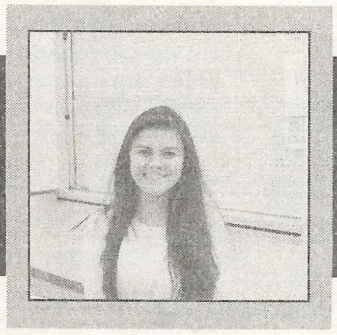
"All the sweet Christmas sweaters."
-Aaron Jackson, Senior

"We watch 'Elf' every year."
-Tyler Mackey, Senior

"Spend time with my family. It's the most important time."
-Mr. Andrew Williams

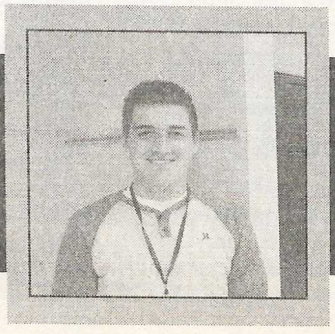


"Opening presents."
-Chris Prosser, Junior



"Decorating the Christmas Tree."
-Ciara Ciani, Junior

"Getting together with my extended family."
-Christopher Doyle, Senior



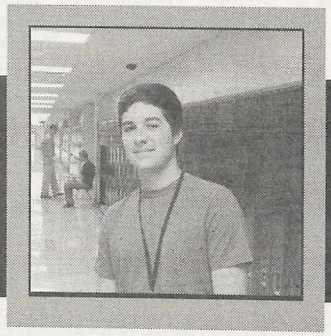
"Washington University Messiah concert at Christmas."
-Mr. Keith Baker

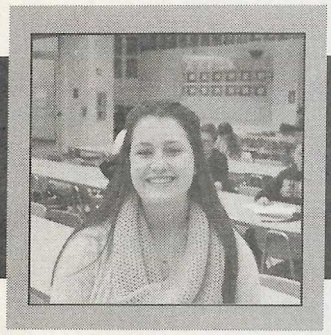
"Christmas Eve, my whole family gets together, and we open one present, it's always pajamas."

-Mr. Allen Duncan

"Lighting the candles on Hanukkah."

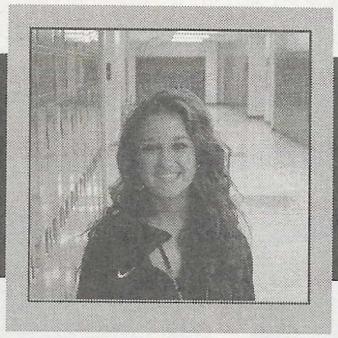
-David Sedycias, Junior





"Opening presents on Christmas morning."

-Jordyn Failoni, Senior



"My mom bakes a little baby into a cupcake and whoever eats it, gets to open presents first."

-Lydia Davey, Senior

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